

Blue Alterations

Al Stauffer/Tom Lawton Duo

Al Stauffer, string bass

Tom Lawton, piano

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|-----|--------------------------------|------|
| [1] | Blue Alterations (Tom Lawton) | 8:45 |
| [2] | Yestermorrow (Tom Lawton) | 6:23 |
| [3] | In Time Past (Al Stauffer) | 8:53 |
| [4] | Tired Blues (Bernard Pfeiffer) | 5:24 |
| [5] | Melody (Aram Khachaturian) | 8:25 |

Producer and Engineer: Bob Sellman

Artwork: Kathy Maly

Recorded May 31, 1981 at Wilson Music Hall, Glassboro State College
(now Rowan University), New Jersey

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A small but distinguished coterie of Philadelphia jazz artists were drawn into the orbit of the later French expatriate pianist and composer Bernard Peiffer in the 1960s and 1970s. They included the two musicians on this recording. Al Stauffer performed with Peiffer on a regular basis throughout this period, and Tom Lawton studied with the great but underappreciated jazzmaster until his death in 1976. Indeed, those who followed Peiffer's incommensurately chronicled transit throughout the jazz firmament can hear glinting echoes of his playing in Lawton's brilliant keyboard style: Lawton fills his pianologue with heady runs, craggy configurations and bluesy intimations of melancholy that are strongly reminiscent of the man from Epinal.

Peiffer was a charming man who experienced some difficulty in communicating via the English language, albeit no problem at all when the keyboard was his conduit. The one composition by which he is represented on this recording, *Tired Blues*, bears that title because of a semantic misunderstanding: Peiffer told a commentator some years after he had written it that the meaning he'd really had in mind was "relaxed".

Stauffer was one of the Philadelphia area's most esteemed jazz bassists. Largely self-taught on the instrument, at the time of this recording he had been a professional musician for more than three decades. Over the years he accompanied such prime jazzmen as Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Gerry Mulligan, Bill Evans and Sam Most, and his association with Peiffer lasted a dozen years. He lived in Sewell, New Jersey, and taught privately in Philadelphia and at Glassboro (New Jersey) State College, now renamed Rowan University. His duets with himself—singing the notes while he plucks them on the bass—are a trademark of some singularity.

Tom Lawton, a native of Collegeville, Pennsylvania, came to jazz endowed with twelve years of classical training, starting at the age of seven. He studied at the Bryn Mawr Conservatory with

Horace Alwyne and Judith Willoughby and also attended the Philadelphia Musical Academy. He was inspired to study jazz upon hearing a performance by pianist Gerald Price. Not long thereafter, he began a concurrent study of piano (jazz and classical) with Peiffer and improvisational concepts with Stauffer.

Altogether, this sentient combination of artists (and the implied presence of another, who welds them spiritually) cannot but make this production an auspicious beginning for the Direct-to-Tape jazz series. Their music is thoroughly modern; yet it pays honor to the blues, to jazz rhythms and sonorities as traditional to the art as lace to a wedding. Nor should one neglect to take note of that which is new here — a shimmering mosaic of notes, timbres and natural sounds which focuses the ear upon the essence of the here and now. Now, that's jazz! —Nels Nelson

Acknowledgements

Direct-to-Tape Recording Company gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of Gloucester State College in making Wilson Music Hall available for this recording, made on May 31, 1981.

Recording Information

Each piece on this recording was recorded as a complete performance and contains no splices or editing. The recording was made using two Schoeps mics placed at a distance from the performing group to capture the sound of the group as you would hear it in a true acoustic performance with no amplification.



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